

Anarchist Radio in France

Fifth Estate Collective

1983

One of the 28 or so Radios Libres (Free Radios) broadcasting in Paris is Radio Libertaire. "La Voix Sans Maître" (The Voice Without Master) sponsored by the Fédération Anarchiste Française (The French Anarchist Federation). The FAF is comprised of 120 French anarchist groups and began transmission of the underground station in September 1981.

Radio Libertaire had already been on the air during the Giscard presidency along with hundreds of other pirate stations; many of them barely audible. However, with the presidential victory of socialist François Mitterand, who opposed the state controlled media monopoly, the stations have been granted a semi-official status as Radios Libres and 300 applicants competed for less than two dozen licenses on the FM dial.

Radio Libertaire has been airing a full schedule of programming 24 hours a day including music, commentary and shows from the Spanish CNT. 18 Radios Libres have been granted permission for legal broadcasting, with only several more yet to be accepted. The selection process has been subjected to much criticism and it was only through the rapid mobilization of a protest car caravan that the government even relented to consider the anarchist station for licensing.

Other stations complained of unfair treatment as well pointing to the preferential consideration given to Cite 96, a leftist station backed by Prime Minister Andre Mauroy which fueled the charges of favoritism. The staff of one Radio Le Libre, Ici et Maintenant (Here and Now) went on a hunger strike to dramatize their protest. Stations which already received licenses include Frequence Gaie (gay liberation), Radio Nova (jazz), Radio Gilda (for children), Generation 2000 (rock), Frequence Dom-Tom (reggae) and a station each for the Christian, Arab and Jewish communities.

Radio Libertaire was initially funded by loans from friends and comrades of FAF and were paid back through money raised at a series of benefits. Ongoing operating expenses are raised through listener contributions, collections at FAF bookstores, continuing benefits and an international fund-raising campaign.

The anarchist format has turned out to be exceedingly popular, with even the government agency in charge of radio and TV determining that Radio Libertaire was number six in popularity among the Radios Libres with an audience of 80,000 listeners.

It is expected that the anarchist station will be the target of official disapproval due to its sharp criticism of politics and the state and fears are that the government will try to drive it from the airwaves. It will take a continuous show of support to maintain pressure on the socialist government to keep the airwaves open.

As part of a fund-raising and support drive Radio Libertaire is selling posters, badges and t-shirts. The badges are \$1 and t-shirts are \$10; order from Radio Libertaire, 145 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, France.

As we go to press we have learned from Radio Libertaire in Paris that they have been denied a legal broadcasting license at this time. They say that their plans are to continue broadcasting as they have been and will continue to do so as long as the government does not stop them.

Trying to maintain regular transmission in the face of official opposition resistance would indeed be difficult to say the least, but on the other hand, an anarchist radio station licensed by the state does suggest some contradictions for libertarians. Perhaps this way will work out for the better.

More Anarcho-Radio

Black Rose Radio (every Friday, 8 pm, WMBR-FM, 88.1, Cambridge, Mass.) is producing a series of thoughtful programs with libertarian themes, the subject matter of which is usually missing from U.S. airwaves.

Their first show on nuclear weapons and the Cold War came right before the June NYC anti-nuke march and they now have a collective of 10 or so people producing monthly shows. On Labor Day weekend "Work & Power" was aired and two more, one on housing and another on the Italian ultra-left, are in process.

The radio collective is interested in having the programs aired by other stations, so if you have access to such, contact Black Rose, Box 167, Cambridge MA 02142

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